



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
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MEMORANDUM FOR: AIS Observers

FROM: David Potter  
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Data Quality Bonus System

Recently, there have been questions among observers about our current bonus system. Some of the questions included: how and why the bonus system was created, how is an observer evaluated, and what the point system means. These questions and concerns resulted in the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) sending out a questionnaire to evaluate observers' knowledge of the bonus system and to gain feedback. Responses were studied and discussed by senior staff.

The bonus system was originally implemented with the 2002 Observer contract provider. The intent was to provide a reward for outstanding data collection and observer performance. It was meant as incentive for the observer to collect and submit accurate and reliable data with as few errors as possible. Research was conducted among NEFOP staff to establish a system that would be a fair and effective way of rewarding observers for high quality data and work performance. After multiple revisions, NEFOP came up with a system to ensure that observers are evaluated in an objective and consistent manner.

An observer becomes eligible for a bonus 3 months after the completion of their 3-week training course certification (completion of training trips). In order to be eligible, observers must complete an average of 12 sea days per month within the evaluation period. The evaluations were previously done on an annual basis, but they will now be done quarterly, starting October 1, 2005. The pay out will occur annually. After each quarter (Jan-Mar, Apr-Jun, July-Sep, Oct-Dec), regardless of whether your data score earned a bonus or not, you will have a clean slate for the next quarter.

When an observer becomes eligible for bonuses, a bonus evaluation form is filled out by the observer's data editor for each trip they observe. Criteria on the evaluation form account for 80% of your bonus.



10% There was correct and timely submission of OBSCON. Trip data and samples were received by NEFOP on time.

50% Sampling was sufficient and correctly done. General protocols were correctly followed for the trip.

20% Logs were filled in completely and overall formatting on the logs was done correctly.

Included in this packet is an explanation of how an editor critiques observers on each criterion. AIS will be mailing out copies of your bonus evaluations forms that your editor has completed, on a monthly basis.

The remaining 20% of your score is based on field performance (10%) and communications (10%). Field performance includes random vessel selection and the results of captains' interviews which are conducted by Area Coordinators. Communications includes interactions with editors, NEFOP staff, as well as AIS staff.

During the end of year evaluation period, the Branch Chief, along with the Contract Officer and Program Manager, will determine if an observer has done an exceptional job, for example, collecting a large amount of incidental take samples, or bringing in whole animals. If acknowledged, an extra 5 points will be rewarded and added to the observer's total score.

There are two monetary levels for the bonus. Scores of 90-100, averaged over successful quarters, will receive \$100 for each sea day completed during those quarters. Scores of 85-89 will receive \$50 for each sea day. Any scores below 85 will not receive a monetary reward. ROUTINE DEDUCTIONS ARE TAKEN BY YOUR EMPLOYER FROM THE BONUS AMOUNTS, e.g., TAXES, REQUIRED STATE DEDUCTIONS, etc. These amounts are currently averaging ~ 15%.

The definition NEFOP uses for a sea day is: The observer is on the water for at least 6 hours or the gear touches the water (set/hailed/washed). The number of sea days is calculated by NEFOP on a trip basis.

Bonus calculations done on a quarterly basis are outlined below:

1. List trips with number of sea days and scores for OBSCON (0 or 10), protocols/sampling (0 or 50), and completeness/formatting (0 or 20).
2. Sum columns and count non-aborted trips.
3. Sum total data quality points.
4. Complete average data quality score by dividing total data quality points by the number of trips.



Bonus calculations done on an annual basis are outlined below:

1. Add communications/vessel selection, data quality and extra credit score to determine total bonus score. Calculate the bonus reward amount.
2. If the score is 90-100, the bonus is \$100 multiplied by the number of sea days. If the score is 85-89, the bonus is \$50 multiplied by the number of sea days. A score of less than 85 earns no bonus.

At the end of the evaluation period, NEFOP will first determine whether the observer averaged at least 12 days at sea per month. If so, the scores will be calculated and the contractor will receive notice of monetary amounts. THIS CAN BE A LENGTHY PROCESS, DUE TO EDITING REQUIREMENTS. DO NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE YOUR BONUS UNTIL SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE EVALUATION PERIOD HAS ENDED.

Twenty four questionnaires were completed and submitted by observers. The results of the questionnaire were wide-ranging. NEFOP staff thoroughly reviewed the completed questionnaires and discussed options on how the bonus could be better suited for everybody. A copy of the bonus questionnaire and the results are included in this packet.

If you have questions regarding sampling protocols you should call your editor. NEFOP staff wants to ensure that observers are rewarded for high quality data. We also want to ensure that the bonus is attainable by all observers doing an outstanding job. NEFOP has re-evaluated how the bonus evaluation form is completed and how the bonus assessment is applied. NEFOP recognizes that observers may feel knit-picked for small formatting errors. Formatting errors will be less stressed, although still important. Data you submit should be in its final format and it is expected that observers review their logs and samples for completeness, accuracy, and continuity before sending them in.

Frequent meetings will continue to be held to ensure consistency between editors. More timely feedback will be given to observers on their bonus evaluations. NEFOP will invest more time in explaining how the bonus evaluation is performed and will report on bonus achievement levels.

Any questions about the bonus revision can be directed to KB McArdle ([Katherine.McArdle@noaa.gov](mailto:Katherine.McArdle@noaa.gov)) or (508) 495-2377.

